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RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 002118

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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE; NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/LOGGERFO

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/24/2016  
TAGS: [KPAL](#) [KWBG](#) [PREL](#) [IS](#) [ASEC](#) [CASC](#)  
SUBJECT: SPORADIC VIOLENCE IN GAZA; IDF OPERATION LEAVES  
THREE DEAD IN RAMALLAH

REF: A. JERUSALEM 02007

[1](#)B. JERUSALEM 02066

[1](#)C. JERUSALEM 01622

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Sporadic violence continued in Gaza May 23-24. In Ramallah, a May 24 IDF arrest operation targeting a PIJ activist resulted in four Palestinians dead and at least 35 wounded. HAMAS spokesmen publicly accused the Fatah-dominated Preventive Security Organization (PSO) of orchestrating attacks against HAMAS members. General Intelligence (Mukhabarat) sources indicated that they are questioning two GI officers and a maintenance employee in connection with the May 20 assassination attempt against GI Chief Tariq Abu Rajab. According to PA and UN contacts in Gaza, the 3000-strong Interior Ministry Special Security Force is well-organized, equipped, and disciplined by Gaza standards. END SUMMARY.

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HAMAS Accuses PSO Of  
Involvement in Attack  
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[1](#)2. (C) Presidential Guard sources in Gaza reported that masked gunmen seized three HAMAS militants outside a Khan Yunis mosque on May 24 at 0930L, shot them, and dumped the wounded men a short while later outside a gas station. One of the men, Salem Mohammad Eqdaih, later died of his wounds. In statements to the media, HAMAS spokesmen said the assailants were members of the "Israeli-backed PSO." (NOTE: PSO members have been implicated in several security incidents (ref A). END NOTE.)

[1](#)3. (C) In separate incidents, HAMAS militants exchanged fire with masked gunmen in the Jala'a area of Gaza City. A bomb exploded outside the home of a HAMAS-affiliated cleric, Shaykh Wafa Ayyad, in the Nusayrat refugee camp. There were no casualties reported in the bombing. In the West Bank, an IDF undercover unit May 24 entered Ramallah's Manara Square and arrested a Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) activist and five other Palestinians. Additional IDF units entered Ramallah after the undercover unit was discovered and pelted with stones by Palestinian youths. Subsequent clashes between the Palestinians and the IDF resulted in four Palestinians dead by IDF gunfire, and at least 35 wounded. The IDF withdrew from Ramallah as of 1600L.

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Mukhabarat Arrests Three in Connection  
With Abu Rajab Assassination Attempt  
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14. (C) Mukhabarat sources told POL FSN on May 23 that two unidentified General Intelligence officers and a maintenance employee, Muhammad Abu Jabal, are being questioned in connection with the May 20 assassination attempt against Tariq Abu Rajab (ref B). The General Intelligence investigators suspect that Abu Jabal placed the device during routine maintenance on the intelligence chief's private elevator.

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Composition and Structure Of  
Interior Ministry Force  
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15. (C) According to reports from the Presidential Guard, General Intelligence and UN sources, the Interior Ministry Special Security Force is well-organized, equipped, and disciplined by Gaza standards. Palestinian contacts in Gaza describe the force as "orderly" and "cautious." These contacts provided information on the force:

-- Composition: The Interior Ministry culled the 3,000-strong force from its most experienced fighters in the HAMAS-affiliated militias. Presidential Guard sources estimate that 2,500 members belong to HAMAS' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, while the remainder are recruited from Jamal Abu Samhadaneh's branch of the Popular Resistance Committees (PRC). The force is divided into groups of 5-6 men who are deployed at every major intersection in the Gaza Strip.

--Leadership: Yusif al-Zahar, brother of the PA Foreign Minister Mahmud al-Zahar, serves as the overall commander of the Special Security Force, while PRC head Jamal Abu Samhadaneh's role is unclear. The Interior Ministry

appointed Samhadaneh as the "Inspector General" of the new force last month (ref C).

--Equipment: Members are issued an AK-47 rifle, several magazines of ammunition and a uniform. According to UN sources, the units are able to rapidly call in reinforcements with RPGs and heavier caliber machine-guns. In several media reports, the forces have appeared with truck mounted machine-guns. The 5-6 man teams patrol in trucks purchased from a Gaza City merchant who sells used PA equipment. Each team is equipped with a hand-held radio.

--Structure: Egyptian security contacts in Gaza indicated that the Interior Ministry has divided Gaza into six zones corresponding to HAMAS' military command structure -- Rafah, Khan Yunis, Deir al-Balah, Central Gaza, Gaza City and North Gaza. Forces deployed in each of the areas report to the HAMAS commander for that zone. The force has two command centers, one in Shati refugee camp and the other in Khan Yunis.

WALLES